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THE FROZEN GRAIL  
*and Other Poems*

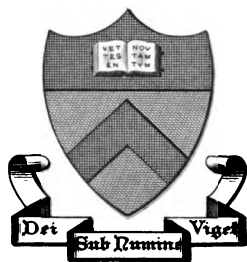
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ELSA BARKER

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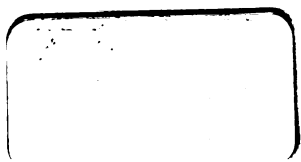
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**THE FROZEN GRAIL**  
**AND OTHER POEMS**



# THE FROZEN GRAIL

## AND OTHER POEMS

BY

ELSA BARKER

AUTHOR OF "THE SON OF MARY BETHEL"



DUFFIELD & COMPANY

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**THE FROZEN GRAIL  
AND OTHER POEMS**



## THE FROZEN GRAIL

*(To Peary and his men, before the last expedition.)*

WHY sing the legends of the Holy Grail,  
The dead crusaders of the Sepulchre,  
While these men live? Are the great bards all dumb?  
Here is a vision to shake the blood of Song,  
And make Fame's watchman tremble at his post.

What shall prevail against the spirit of man,  
When cold, the lean and snarling wolf of hunger,  
The threatening spear of ice-mailed Solitude,  
Silence, and space, and ghostly-footed Fear  
Prevail not? Dante, in his frozen hell  
Shivering, endured no bleakness like the void  
These men have warmed with their own flaming will,  
And peopled with their dreams. The wind from fierce  
Arcturus in their faces, at their backs  
The whip of the world's doubt, and in their souls  
Courage to die—if death shall be the price  
Of that cold cup that will assuage their thirst,  
They climb, and fall, and stagger toward the goal.  
They lay themselves the road whereby they travel,  
And sue God for a franchise. Does He watch  
Behind the lattice of the boreal lights?  
In that grail-chapel of their stern-vowed quest,

## THE FROZEN GRAIL

Ninety of God's long paces toward the North,  
Will they behold the splendour of His face?

To conquer the world must man renounce the world?  
These have renounced it. Had ye only faith  
Ye might move mountains, said the Nazarene.  
Why, these have faith to move the zones of man  
Out to the point where All and Nothing meet.  
They catch the bit of Death between their teeth,  
In one wild dash to trample the unknown  
And leap the gates of knowledge. They have dared  
Even to defy the sentinel that guards  
The doors of the forbidden—dared to hurl  
Their breathing bodies after the Ideal,  
That like the heavenly kingdom must be taken  
Only by violence. The star that leads  
The leader of this quest has held the world  
True to its orbit for a million years.

And shall he fail? They never fail who light  
Their lamp of faith at the unwavering flame  
Burnt for the altar service of the Race  
Since the beginning. He shall find the strange—  
The white immaculate Virgin of the North,  
Whose steady gaze no mortal ever dared,  
Whose icy hand no human ever grasped.  
In the dread silence and the solitude  
She waits and listens through the centuries  
For one indomitable, destined soul,  
Born to endure the glory of her eyes,  
And lift his warm lips to the frozen Grail.

## THE SONG OF THE NORTH POLE FLAG

I AM the banner of earth's farthest goal!  
Can any gaze on me and doubt Man's soul  
Is mightier than the armies of despair,  
And older than the Star that guards the Pole?

The youngest of all banners, I have made  
The loneliest journeys, glad and unafraid;  
I know the crags where hungry horrors crawl  
And with the wild wind demons I have played.

Love made me in the smiling earlier years;  
But I was cut with Destiny's cold shears  
From fabrics woven on Fame's iron loom,  
And I am stained with time, with sweat, and tears.

In the beginning I was meant to be  
Only the nation's emblem; then round me  
New meanings were assembled, and I stand  
Now as the ensign of Man's sovereignty.

For every star—some stab of adverse Fate;  
My crimson stripes are bands of love and hate  
That have been loosened, and my field of blue  
Is the long Northern night wherein we wait.



## THE FROZEN GRAIL

Then gaze upon my wounds. For I have left  
Fragments of me in many an ice-fringed cleft;  
Marking the desperate highway step by step  
Are Glory's shrines—and portions of my weft.

At last I waved on earth's last mound of white,  
And triumphed in the radiant, frosty light;  
For only he who leaves himself behind  
Shall stand with God upon the utmost height.

## FREEDOM

CALL no man free nor count his bondage done,  
Though he be master of unminted gold  
With kings to do him homage, if his hold  
Be not so strong on the immortal sun—  
The shining, heliocentric Self—that none  
May loosen it. Fearless and will-controlled,  
Alike though friends pursue him or grow cold—  
That man the crown of liberty has won.

And fancy not that feeling, and the thrill  
Of love, are absent from him. Infinite  
The love that waits the calling of his will  
Whose longing is the whole world's benefit;  
And happiness shall flood him to the fill—  
When he has mastered the desire of it.



## ONE OF THESE LITTLE ONES

**O** LITTLE child, O wide-eyed wondering child!  
Well do I know you are a captured wild  
Bird from the outer blue, that beats its wings  
Against the barriers of earth-bound things.  
How many miles into the awful vast  
Your mother must have soared, to seize you fast  
And bring you back with her, to be a white  
Proof of the fearless journey! The sunlight  
Still half bewilders you; and in your sleep  
You smile, because the darkness is so deep  
After the earth-glare, and the rest so kind  
After the search for One you cannot find.

You are the Dream made flesh. You are the grail  
Pilgrim,—another, passionate and frail,  
Leaving the House of Beauty for the quest  
Of that high Vision by no man possessed.  
Indomitable must be God's desire  
To realise Life's secret and acquire  
Mastery, when he sends you, one by one,  
Eternally, to question the bright sun  
And the dark earth and the indifferent stars!  
O Baby! will you pass the golden bars

## THE FROZEN GRAIL

Guarding the pathway to the great abode?  
Or will you leave your dust to make the road  
Softer for those who follow? I am blind,  
Even as Love or Justice, and I find  
No answer to the riddle that has wrung  
The souls of mothers since the world was young.

## THE DREAMERS

WHAT matter though the thorn of pain  
Forever seeks our quivering heart,  
And midnight of our tears is fain?  
Our sorrows are the golden grain  
Of the great reaper—Art.

What matter though we ask for bread,  
And the dull world bestows the stone?  
On God's own manna we are fed,  
Honey of dreams, and wine love-red  
To the dull world unknown.

Earth's palace doors are open wide  
That narrow souls may enter in;  
But we in Beauty's tent abide,  
Adoring that unravished bride  
Whose veil the ages spin.

We walk the vision-haunted way  
Beyond the rainbow's fragile bridge;  
In Uriel's inner shrine we pray;  
With equal wonder we survey  
The planet and the midge.

## THE FROZEN GRAIL

The Rose of Life to us reveals  
Her hidden petals without shame,  
For in our questing faith she feels  
The love that melts the seven seals  
Of the Eternal Name.

## BEFORE DAWN

WHEN in the lone and silence of the night  
I wake bewildered with desire and dread,—  
Peering among the shadows round my bed  
For something that eludes me in the light,—  
I hearken for those echoes from the height  
That thrilled the dreams still hovering overhead,  
In that dim land where longing lures the dead  
To lend our earth-blind eyes their clearer sight.

Then, then for one brief heartbeat there appears  
To me the vision of my austere soul,  
Godlike and pure, with storied aureole,  
And eyes that burn with memories of lost years,  
And finger pointing my forsaken goal . . .  
Oh, hide me, God, in the blind deep of tears!





## THE MUSE

**S**HE is the idol of the wise,  
The mistress of the rhyming race;  
But pain lurks in her luring eyes,  
And bitter-sweet is her embrace.

She lightly chains her chosen ones  
With whispered secrets, half-confessed;  
But when they summon her, she shuns  
And leaves them to the lonely quest.

The face of love is not so fair  
As hers; all tender questionings  
And dreams are hidden in her hair,  
And memories of forgotten things.

The siren of the sea of souls,  
She lures her lovers with the lyre  
To leave their galleys for the goals  
Where burns the sacrificial fire.

The world and all the wealth of it  
They barter for her lightning kiss—  
The rhythm of the Infinite,  
The vision of the vast abyss.

## THE FROZEN GRAIL

But they who drink the Muse's breath  
Pay for the draught with many tears—  
Their destiny until their death  
To seek her shadow down the years.

Sometimes into their lone retreat  
Is blown her veil's divine perfume;  
Sometimes her rainbow-sandalled feet  
Go whispering by them in the gloom.

And strange and varied gifts she brings:  
To some the amaranth of fame,  
To some the gaunt wolf's yammerings,  
To some the burning book of shame.

Along the lanes of alien lands  
Their hard and lonely pathway lies,  
And not a being understands  
The wistful madness of their eyes.

Sometimes, when twilight veils the street,  
A wanderer hears upon the air  
A sound so mystically sweet,  
He sighs a half-forgotten prayer;

Sometimes the whole world starts, and thrills  
To harmonies that vastly roll . . .  
'Tis only one of them who stills  
With song the yearning of his soul.

## THROUGH THE VEIL

**A**LWAYS it seems  
That only a thin veil—  
Sheer as the music of the nightingale—  
Trembles and streams  
Between me and the mystery of dreams.

Sometimes at dawn,  
I am so strangely near  
I feel its high, ecstatic atmosphere.  
And then . . . 'tis gone!  
A breath stirs, and the wonder is withdrawn.

Sometimes a bird  
Sings at the twilight hour,  
Or I perceive the fragrance of a flower . . .  
And I have heard,  
But cannot speak, the unapparent word.

Sometimes the breeze  
Passes over my hair  
Like the hand of Something . . . and I turn and stare . . .  
And my soul sees  
A fluttering in the sensitive willow trees!

## THE FROZEN GRAIL

But oftener,  
When I am very still,  
Deep in my heart I feel a sudden thrill:  
A messenger  
From the Unseen signals and would confer.

Some day, I know,  
That Presence will appear—  
Too high to reach, too beautiful to fear!  
My songs I owe  
To a strange sign it made me long ago.

## THE CONQUEROR

**W**HAT are the fears and toils of life to me,  
That I should tremble on my guarded throne  
Or plead for pity, making human moan  
Like any helpless creature! Verily  
The crown is to the conqueror, and I see  
Beyond this hour of battle. I have sown  
With lavish hand my fertile fields, and own  
The plenty of my harvests. Destiny,  
Tyrant of slaves, is servant of my will;  
To all my gods are her libations poured,  
And only at my bidding may she fill  
The cups of good and evil on my board.  
My song Time's warning finger shall not still,  
Nor Pain destroy me with his flaming sword!



## THE SERVANTS OF THE KING

**O**NE day I wandered out upon the road  
That spans the mad world, near my calm abode,  
Seeking companions in the restless throng  
That staggered on beneath its varied load.

I bore no burden, save a rhymester's pack  
That lay as light as wings upon my back;  
My goal was life, my only task to sing  
And speed the sun round the glad Zodiac.

I hailed a haggard fellow with a pile  
Of printed stuff—the world's ephemeral file,  
Calling, "Come, listen to a troubadour!"  
He said, "I may have time—after a while."

There passed another in a gorgeous dress,  
Laden with gems, but pale with weariness.  
"Pause, friend," I smiled, "and listen to the wind."  
"Pause!" he replied, "and lose all I possess?"

Then came a man with bricks upon his head,  
Pursuing blindly his elusive bread.  
I called, "Come, listen to a song of life!"  
"What is a song? And what is life?" he said.



## THE FROZEN GRAIL

I cried, "What seek ye all—what wondrous thing!—  
That ye have time neither to laugh nor sing,

Nor hearts to love, nor hours to think, or dream?"  
They said, "We do not know: we serve the king."

"Who is the king to whom your lives are sold?  
What means his power?" I questioned young and old,

Seeking for knowledge; and I only heard:  
"The king is nameless; but his power is gold."

I cried, "Your king is mad! Why, if he knew  
The test that separates the false and true,—

That sifts life's kernel from its worthless chaff,—  
Would he not find some nobler use for you?"

## THE MIDNIGHT LUNCH ROOM

WITH little silver one may enter here,  
And yet those hungry faces watch outside  
The frosty window—and the door is wide!  
The clatter to my unaccustomed ear  
Of dishes and harsh tongues, is like a spear  
Shaken within the sensitive wounded side  
Of Silence. Soiled, indifferent hands provide  
Pitiful fare, and cups of pallid cheer.

In my warm, fragrant home an hour ago  
I wrote a sonnet on the peace they win  
Who worship Beauty! Let me breathe it low . . .  
What would it mean if chanted in this din?  
What would it say to those out in the snow,  
Who hunger, and who may not enter in?



## POET-BROTHER

**B**EAUTIFUL Brother, with the wild thrush note  
That soars and thrills—and catches in your throat  
With rain of tones and tears! Do you recall  
How shadow-lyrics flickered on the wall,  
Back in Euterpe's palace of star-snow  
And deathless roses, in the long ago?  
Babes of that gentle mother, from her breast  
Drawing the milk of wonder, we were blest  
With rhythmic sustenance, made pure and strong  
In the high-born fraternity of song.

Nay, do you wonder we are aliens here  
With the earth-people? We have been too near,  
Brother of mine, to the pale moon of dreams  
Ever to measure how unreal it seems  
To those who love the gaslight. We have heard  
The far-off singing of the homeless bird—  
Whose name is Beauty; but the world of men,  
Busy with cares, will hardly listen when  
Our trembling reverent lips repeat the song.  
Pilgrims of time are we, and overlong  
Seems the great quest. The mystery of tears  
Our souls have tasted; but the listening years  
Will learn a new, glad music through our breath  
Before we lie in the loving arms of Death.

## THE FROZEN GRAIL

Beautiful elder brother, in the cold  
Desert of hope my spirit is consoled  
By your strong hand-clasp. Though we wander far  
Each from the other, though the future bar  
The doors of life between us; yet I know  
That I shall find you where the lilies blow  
Around the mystic fountain. I shall stand  
Singing beside you on the silver sand  
Of the Uranian ocean. And my faith,  
Beckoning afar, shall call you as a wraith  
Over the shadows, when the demons lean  
And lure you from the crags of the Unseen.

## A BOOK OF MAGIC

OLD learnèd reveller in mystic joys  
And darer of the demons! I have read  
Your symbol-graven pages full of dread—  
Of godlike exaltation. Childish toys,  
Circles and wheels, your subtle hand employs  
To more than mature uses. Were the dead  
Indeed your servants? Have the unborn fled  
Before your word, that raises or destroys?

I have a magic higher far than yours,  
Marvellous *Lévi*,\* and its works are signed  
With God's own seal: The patient love that cures  
All the lone, bitter sadness of the mind;  
The gentle word that comforts and endures;  
The faith that lights a beacon for mankind.

\* Eliphas Lévi: "*Haute Magie*."



## THE MASTER OF PAIN

**M**ASTER with the patient eyes,  
Thou art pitiful and wise;  
In the folds of thy red garment  
Hush my broken cries.

Dost thou hold me then so dear,  
Master, in thy heart austere,  
That I never can escape thee  
For one little year?

Let my yearning soul enjoy  
Peace and love without alloy  
For one brief but golden season—  
Thou canst yet destroy!

Pity me—as thou art strong!  
Leave me in the fields of song;  
I would linger in the sunshine,  
For the night is long.

Thou wilt promise unto me  
If I wrest my spirit free,  
Power and treasure beyond measure,  
As my stars decree;



## THE FROZEN GRAIL

If I drink thy bitter-sweet,  
Bind thy sandals on my feet,  
Thou wilt lead me through Pain's valley  
Unto peace complete.

I may stand with thee at last  
Where the present and the past  
And the future blend together  
In the timeless Vast;

Where the singing of the spheres  
Charms away all human fears,  
And the harps of unborn beings  
Echo down the years.

There the passions of the earth  
Will appear of little worth,  
And my soul will scarce remember  
Its own tears and mirth.

## AFTER FIFTEEN YEARS

THE hills are not so high as once they were;  
And the old woods, that seemed so dark and vast  
In those remembered child days of the past,  
Are only a few trees, that now confer  
In whispers of this curious wayfarer  
Who stands and gazes so. The young pines cast  
Shy glances at me; they were twigs when last  
I questioned them, and they were tenderer.

The grey old empty house is like a dream  
That haunts the memory in the clear noonday.  
The silent room of birth is tenanted  
By disembodied yearnings, and they seem  
Vaguely to know that I have found a way  
To something unimagined by the dead.



## MARIE

O H, why is your merry laugh, Marie,  
Made strange by an under sound?  
It haunts my heart like the memory  
Of a face I have never found.  
*'Tis maybe you hear the crying drear  
Of my baby underground.*

Why flows the golden wine, Marie,  
So freely for your sake?  
Can you drink of its joy so feverishly  
With never an after ache?  
*'Tis my thirst from the tears I have drunk long years  
No cup can ever slake.*

And why do you dance and sing, Marie,  
Till the call of the wakening lark,  
Till the morning star nods drowsily  
And is only a smouldering spark?  
*I'm the lamp at the head of his lonely bed,  
For I know he fears the dark.*

And why when the laughter is gay, Marie,  
And the midnight minutes fly,  
Do you clutch your breast all suddenly,  
With a gasp and a startled cry?  
*'Tis the biting drought of his cold, small mouth,  
That will hurt me till I die.*



## ON A BUNDLE OF NEW POETS

THEY are so many who in early spring  
Gather the wild wood violets of song  
To weave a wreath for Beauty! They are strong  
With untried sinews, and the Vision's wing  
Has brushed their souls in passing. Shadows cling  
Around them in the noonday, and the long  
Reaches of night are peopled with a throng  
Of laurelled phantoms, gravely beckoning.

They are so few, so few who find the shrine  
Of the white Wonder! For the air is cold  
Upon the mount of triumph, and malign  
Dragons beset the path. Only the bold  
May dare the love that makes man's words divine—  
The faith that fired the prophet bards of old.



## THE QUEST

ONE thing I know, if only one:  
Before Life's glowing west  
Shall swallow up my setting sun,  
My soul will end its quest.

Hard are the roads and hazardous,  
But sure my soul's designs;  
The Moon and mystic Uranus  
Have sealed them in the Signs.

I know not if the treasure sought  
Be love, or God, or death;  
But that my title has been wrought  
Of passion, blood and breath.

Somewhere I know the wonder waits;  
And though the days are long,  
I challenge the stern, bloodless Fates  
To still my calling-song.

But I have found strange company:  
Aye, in the maze of years  
My mind has known the madman's glee,  
I have tasted gall and tears.



## THE FROZEN GRAIL

For I have dared to grasp my dreams,  
Though knowing they were null;  
Have dared to face the light that gleams  
Upon the hollow skull.

Yet, God, thou knowest I am weak  
And weary, and would rest.  
Unveil the symbol that I seek—  
The Sangreal of my quest!

## THE COUNSELLORS

**M**Y soul was taking counsel with my mind  
Last night when all the city lay asleep.

The mind said:—Sister, wherefore dost thou weep,  
Now when the world is willing to be kind  
To our divine endeavour? Though we find  
The pathway up the mountain wild and steep,  
Surely we will not stumble if we keep  
Bravely together with our arms entwined.

But softly the soul answered through her tears:—

The kindness of the world is like a vine,  
Sister, whose intricate network interferes  
With the soul's climbing. Yonder summit shrine  
He never reaches who too fondly peers  
Into the foaming goblet of world-wine.



## REQUIESCAT

**W**HY do you cry so loudly underground,  
Buried Ideal? Have I not laid you deep,  
And drugged you with grim truths to make you sleep,  
And set the cross above your low, bare mound?

You were the last of all my rainbow band!  
For years I hid you in a guarded place,  
That none might see your sweet, unearthly face,  
Nor hear your words no brain could understand.

Even to you has come the destined hour  
That waits for all things lovely. On your brow  
I laid my lips in parting, to walk now  
The lone unfriended alien path of power.

Why do you haunt me still with yearning cries?  
Long have you stood between me and the goal  
Only discovered by the clear-eyed soul  
That dares the face of Life without disguise.

Never again till cold earth covers me  
Can you and I hold counsel the night through.  
Never again shall I deny for you  
What all the mocking gods declare to be.



## DANTE

**P**ALE Priest of Song, immortal as the earth  
That walks the skies with pride, remembering thee !  
Deign to receive, from my humility,  
One word to swell the story of thy worth  
Kept in the world's great archives. At thy birth  
The stars of Fame's nine heavens auspiciously  
Assembled, and the sun of Poetry,  
Blazing too fiercely, made thy life a dearth.

But oh, the glory and beatitude,  
When thine ecstatic vision, justified  
By flaming song, made heaven forever real !  
So, Master, we thy scholars, poor and crude,  
Now follow thee, as thou thy laurelled guide,  
Up the steep road to our divine Ideal.



## BESIDE THE ROAD

FROM my still cottage, off the road,  
I see the noisy world go by,  
Forever driven by the goad,  
Forever bending to the load,  
Unmindful of the sky.

The spring is here—to-day I found  
A bed of golden daffodils.  
I passed the dull throng blossom-crowned;  
But could not make them turn around,  
Nor join me on the hills.

I know a bank beneath the trees  
Where fragrant purple violets blow;  
I plucked the fairest, on my knees;  
Their fresh, cool beauty seemed to please  
Those plodding ones below.

But when I beckoned toward the wood,  
They did not turn and follow me;  
Yet by their eyes I understood  
They longed to gather flowers, and would—  
If they were only free.



## THE FROZEN GRAIL

But, oh, it is not always spring !  
Winter, that smites all blossoms dead,  
Will find my throng still labouring  
Toward the same hollow, useless Thing—  
But youth and passion fled !

## TO THE APOLLO BELVEDERE

O POET'S vision, petrified by art  
In those glad days when Song was deified,  
Before the simple joy of nature died,  
Or man was burdened with a contrite heart!  
From the dull rabble of our modern mart  
I turn to thee, high being, justified  
In everlasting beauty, passion, pride!  
In our cold age thou hast no counterpart.

Glorious Apollo! Little now remains  
To prove our plodding race was ever young,  
That once man's blood flowed freely in his veins,  
That out of sheer delight he loved and sung.  
When now a lyric measure thrills his tongue,  
'Tis mainly to bewail his hidden pains.



## THE VISIT OF THE MUSE

**B**EING, that comes to me out of the night,  
Walking the moonbeams all silvery-white,  
What is the message you bid me to write?

Are you the Muse whom the rhymers of old  
Saw in their visions, but never could hold—  
She whose rare boons are not bartered and sold?

Long have I wondered when you would appear!  
But, in my garret so bare and austere,  
Muse, I have naught for your comfort, I fear,—

Only a cot with a rose at its head,  
A board that is richer in books than in bread,  
A taper whose flame on the future is fed.

Am I too bold, that I beg you to stay?  
Leisure is costly, and this is the way  
Poets have lived since the myth-makers' day.

We are so happy with fancies and rhymes,  
What do we need of the toys of the times—  
We who in visions can visit all climes?

## THE FROZEN GRAIL

You that are waiting with largess for me,  
Give me the words of a song that shall be  
Hope for the bond and a spur for the free!

Give me a song of the love that shall bind,  
Even as comrades, the mass of Mankind—  
Song of the guerdon they seeking shall find.

Burn me, O Muse, with your mystical flame!  
Whisper the sounds of Man's unified name,  
And I will relinquish the prizes of fame.

Give me the music my brothers will sing  
In the joy of the morning when Love shall be king . . .  
Then bury me under the daisies of spring.

## THE SOUL OF ART

**I** LISTEN to the rhymers' praise of art,  
Of the immortal form, the measured phrase;  
Of the one mirror, and the many ways  
The poet's pale reflection to impart:  
But not a word of the initiate heart,  
Of the incarnate Light whose subtle blaze,  
Intimate of the soul, eludes the gaze—  
Man's goal of yearning, and his counterpart.

I, too, am learnèd in the lore of sound,  
In the cold measurement of lyric speech;  
But what availed my knowledge, till I found  
The hidden Thing mere art can never teach,  
The selfless Thing, too great to be renowned,  
So high—it is within the lowest reach!



## VISHNU, THE 'PERVADER

I AM the self in the centre of all things; I am the unknown  
Wind-swept void on the perilous far outside of my own  
Self;  
I am the darkness of night, and the mystery under the  
shadows;  
I am the vision of light in the love-dazzled eyes of the sun.

I am the ache of desire in the burning caress of the lover;  
Mine is the yearning that draws, and the yielding of love  
in the loved one;  
I am the soul that gives, and the gift, and the joy of the  
giving;  
I am the quiver of hope in the heart of the mother of men.

All earth's musical sounds are but echoes that answer my  
piping;  
Mine is the voice of the thunder, mine is the coo of the  
ring-dove;  
I am the murmur of waters, the whispering wind in the  
pine-trees;  
I am the word in the silence, the dread, and the listening  
hush.



## THE FROZEN GRAIL

I am the ecstasy found in the sleep that no mortal remembers.

Mine are all creatures that crawl, or aspire, or await their aspiring;

Even the writhe of the worm is his longing endeavour to reach Me;

The cry of the eagle is torn from his heart at my touch in the cold air.

## THE DWELLER

**[** MEDITATE upon the soul within.  
Mysterious dweller, could I comprehend  
The need of thy beginning, and the end  
Of all thy struggles! Does the school of Sin  
(So named on earth) provide the discipline  
Thy subtle wisdom seeks—the guide and friend,  
Garbed as a foe, whose conquest shall transcend  
In power all thy lost innocence might win?

Sages have written of thee; but the word—  
If there be one—that can reveal thy deep,  
Deliberate purpose, still designs to keep  
Its boon, for all my pleading, unconferréd.  
Yet puzzling counsels have I overheard  
Sometimes on the unguarded winds of sleep.



## THE EXILE

O COOL, still woods and smiling sky!  
God's home of green and blue!  
When will the world have done with me  
And send me back to you?

The noises of the restless town—  
Jarring, importunate—  
Can never drown the memory  
Of whispering pines that wait.

Oh, will they really wait for me?  
So long I am away!  
Sometimes I fear the laggard years  
May, after all, betray.

It would be very hard to die  
Here in the dust and roar,  
And never feel the cool, still woods  
Around me any more!



## THE ALIEN SINGER

**I**NFINITUDE of distance lies between  
Your world and mine, dear Stranger, though  
your hand  
Lies in my palm so kindly; for the land  
I dwell in, is the land of the Unseen.  
And though I sing its beauty, what I mean  
You know not, neither do you understand;  
Even the language of our peaceful band  
Sounds strange in your loud, turbulent demesne.

But we who wander alien on the earth,  
Return in dream to our beloved home  
Beyond the crags of silence. There we roam  
The gardens of the stars that ruled our birth;  
And with our song, from elemental dearth  
Create your future's walls and splendid dome.



## TWO FRIENDS

**T**HE sweet friend of my body said to me:  
    "Come to the garden, dear,  
    And gather roses while the days are clear;  
For bye and bye 'twill be  
    The blossomless grey autumn of the year."

The stern friend of my spirit said to me:  
    "Daughter, thy way lies here—  
    Here where the flint path leads up to the clear  
Height of Eternity,  
    On the Soul's mountain, passionless, austere."

And I? . . . I stood between them silently  
    And wiped away a tear;  
    For well I knew the flowers would disappear,  
The summer fade for me . . .  
    And yet the flint path filled my soul with fear!





## IN THE MIRROR

**I** HOLD life's magic mirror in my hand,  
And gaze in my own eyes that meet me there  
Fearlessly. Sister, passion and despair  
Have set their seals upon thee; but our grand  
Indomitable spirit still doth stand  
Steadfast amid the tumult. Thou dost wear  
Mysteries hidden in thy midnight hair  
Beyond my power ever to understand.

O thou flower-soft and rosy woman-form  
That our stern spirit chose to test life through!  
Come, let us laugh together as we view  
The little fears and hates that feebly swarm  
Around our dwelling—safe in every storm  
If to each other thou and I are true.



## PRAYER

**M**ASTER and Maker of the suns and seas,  
Thou in whose hand the ripening ages fall!  
I raise my feeble voice in praise of Thee—  
But when hadst Thou the need of mortal praise?  
Whether I cry to Thee as a loving God,  
And bring in prayer to Thee my petty griefs,  
My keen desires, important as the moth's;  
Or in the silence of the mystic night—  
The solemn silence of Thy sentient stars—  
I dumbly worship Thee as the Unknown God,  
My word can bring Thee nothing that shall add  
Aught to Thine ancient glory. Yet, sometimes,  
When I forget Thee in the rush of song  
That sweeps my rapt soul out beyond all reverence . . .  
For one swift heart-leap do I feel Thy breath  
In awful benediction on my brow.



## KEATS

**H**YPERION of poets . . . Shining one!  
To thy pavilion in the realm of air  
Can my soul's incense rise? Art thou aware  
Thy name in every singer's orison  
Is writ in stars, not water? Has there none  
Of all earth's dying dreamers scaled the stair  
Of light after thee, breathless to declare  
Even to thy face thy fame beneath the sun?

But maybe in the region where thou art  
No rumour of the world or the world's ways  
Can ever come. Thy dreams are now a part  
Of God's own vision, and thy deathless lays  
Signed with His name. Approved by Him, thy heart  
Is all oblivious of human praise.



## THE POET

**H**E who is born with the vision of beauty,  
The veil of dream,  
Has one supreme and mystical duty—  
To shed the gleam  
Of his fortunate star on the world's grey stream.

Always the seraphs are winging and singing,  
Though few can hear  
The rapturous music the winds are bringing.—  
Thou keen of ear,  
Translate their songs for our denser sphere.

Poet, thy joy is the whole world's treasure,  
Not thine alone.  
Thy soul is an overflowing measure  
Of seed to be sown  
In the yearning soil of this alien zone.





## INVOCATION

**M**USE, I have served thee now untiringly  
For seven years . . . Unveil thy hidden face!  
Here at the measure of my term of grace  
Give me thy boon, the benedicite  
My spirit trembles toward. Thy veil I see  
Over the world in spring, and shimmering space  
Is dizzy with thee, and thy wild embrace  
Beckons me in the thrill of poetry.

Oh, search my spirit with thy cryptic eyes!  
I am all thine; accept my service now,  
And seal my purposes. Anoint my brow  
With thy protecting chrism: A singer dies  
So soon—sometimes before he justifies  
The faith of his inviolable vow!



## TWO MEN OF OLD

**T**O live and love and sing sweet songs  
Was all the Poet sought;  
His robe was threadbare, but he wore  
The diadem of thought;  
The plodders blamed his dreamy ways,  
Nor knew what he had wrought.

The Statesman schemed and gave his wealth  
To buy immortal fame;  
The Emperor of half the world  
To grace his banquets came;  
And many little busy men  
Were noisy with his name.

A thousand years of days and nights,  
And names, have rolled away:  
The Statesman's proud, ephemeral fame  
Sleeps with his nameless clay;  
But the little songs the poet sang  
The whole world loves to-day.



OSCAR WILDE

**L**AUREATE of corruption, on whose brow  
The bay-leaves are all slimy with the worm!  
Thou art a nightingale whose songs affirm  
The canker in the rosebud, from a bough  
Of the dark cypress warbling. Some strange vow  
Thy spirit must have taken before birth  
To some strange god, to desecrate the earth  
With visions vile and beautiful as thou.

We loathe thee with the sure, instinctive dread  
Of young things for the graveyard and the scar.  
And though God wept when Lucifer's great star  
With its long train cried from the deeps blood-red,  
Still must we name thee with the second dead,  
For when the angels fall they fall so far!



## THE ANGEL OF THE SEPULCHRE

**K** NOW ye that every Resurrection morn  
The Angel of the Sepulchre comes down  
To the world tomb where slumbering souls lie low,  
And rolls away the stone that guards the door?  
Thus the great Angel came to me at dawn  
This Easter Sunday, calling to my soul  
That had been crucified by the mad world,  
Broken and buried—was it days ago,  
Or ages that the temple veil was rent?

Whoever has beheld that Angel's face  
Has felt the dead Christ rising in his heart  
And throwing off the grave-clothes. Till that day,  
The lips of men may chant at Eastertime  
The glory of the Lord they say is risen;  
But all their words are only flickering lights  
Thrown by the rising sun into their tomb,  
Through some slight crevice in the door of clay.





## THE SEEKER

WHAT is the guerdon that my soul has sought  
Blindly my life long over land and sea?  
Morning and evening does it beckon me,  
And in the blaze of noon's laborious thought.  
But though I ever follow, I have caught  
Only the phantom hands of Mystery  
Death-cold; and from my dreams of ecstasy  
I wake—to face the omnipresent Naught.

Spirit of mine, thy strength will never tire;  
Yet would I know what means thy pathless quest,  
Would know the goal of thy long, vague desire.  
What guide of destiny unmanifest  
So lures thee on with cloud and pillared fire  
Through the dark wilderness of life's unrest?



## THE EASTER CHILDREN

“CHRIST the Lord is risen!”  
Chant the Easter children,  
Their love-moulded faces  
Luminous with gladness,  
And their costly raiment  
Gleaming like the lilies.

But last night I wandered  
Where Christ had not risen,  
Where love knows no gladness,  
Where the lord of Hunger  
Leaves no room for lilies,  
And no time for childhood.

And to-day I wonder  
Whether I am dreaming;  
For above the swelling  
Of their Easter music  
I can hear the murmur,  
“Suffer *all* the children.”

Nay, the world is dreaming!  
And my seeing spirit  
Trembles for its waking,  
When their Saviour rises  
To restore the lilies  
To the outcast children.



## THE GERMAN IMMIGRANTS

**H**ERE to the home where past and future meet,  
By myriads you have come, your wistful hearts  
Aflame with hope. You traffic in the marts,  
And with the very mortar of the street  
Mix your high dreams. Your fields of waving wheat  
Banner the West; your tireless mining starts  
The fires of nations; while our new world arts  
Owe to the land of Faust and Marguerite  
Treasures of virile beauty. Brain and brawn,  
O Rhineland! have you given us, and profound  
Are your seed-thoughts sown in our mental ground.  
Your son was he who hailed the social dawn;  
Your sons were they whose harmonies have drawn  
Our new-born music from the caves of sound.



## SONG OF THE ITALIAN IMMIGRANTS

FROM Rome are we, and Genoa,  
And the warm southern vinelands, too;  
Naples and all Italia  
Remember us in dreams . . . but, ah!  
Our hearts have chosen you,

Great unknown country over-seas,  
America! Will you deny  
Our prayer? or raise us from our knees,  
With leave to labour as the bees  
All day without a sigh?

Italia's sons no toils dismay:  
We raised the Colosseum's wall,  
We laid the peerless Appian way  
Never to crumble till the day  
When all old things shall fall.

We are Colombo's kindred; we  
Follow the star that lured him far  
To find thy cradle in the sea,—  
Light of the world, Land of the free!  
Unbar thy doors, unbar!





## NEW YORK HARBOUR AT NIGHT

THE magic veil of night is on the bay.  
Beneath its starry folds the waters glow—  
A floor of lapis-lazuli below;  
The lights along the shores, a girdle gay  
Of many-coloured jewels, gleaming play;  
In the far west the little moon hangs low;  
While from yon dusky form the torch's glow  
Tells where our sleepless guardian stands for aye.

City of mine—lovely by day, by night!  
Like Venus, you have risen from the sea,  
That holds your dear feet still in tender grasp;  
Like Venus, you have won by fair decree  
Your beauty's million-jewelled girdle bright,  
Held round you by the Bridge's diamond clasp.



### THE BUILDER

**O**NLY the Dreamer builds to challenge Time,  
Whether he builds a state, or builds a rhyme;  
The vision of his midnight greets the day  
In Beauty's form—imperishable, sublime.



## THE INVADERS

STRANGE is that timeless battle for the world  
Which poets wage! Their destiny it is  
To lead invasions down the centuries,  
Beyond the outposts of that realm whose purled  
And liliated banner God Himself unfurled  
In the beginning; for no realm of His  
He guards like that of Beauty. Ecstasies  
Against their souls, like passionate armies hurled,  
Still drive them back when they approach too near,  
Smiting them prostrate if they do not fly  
The fiery onslaught. Should the world deny  
Their humble soldier-wages, then they cheer  
Each other with their songs, and disappear  
Down the long winding roads of the bye-and-bye.



## THE WORD OF SUMMER

**D**RIPPING roses from her hand,  
Came dear Summer down the land,  
With her hair a tawny banner  
By the breezes fanned.

And she looked and laughed at me,  
Where I sat all mournfully,  
Counting over my lost labours,  
Near a cypress tree.

And she said: "Oh! why repine?  
All these patient works of mine—  
Leaves and flowers and fragrant apples—  
I must soon resign.

"Not one blossom will remain!  
But do I, like thee, complain?  
Nay, I pause and rest a season,  
Then begin again."





## MY GOLDEN SANDS

**T**O-DAY I meditate upon the years  
Whose sands have fallen in the glass of Time  
Since I was flung into this foreign clime  
Out of infinitude. And it appears  
The one reward of pleasure and of tears  
Is always knowledge; that the paradigm  
Whereon my life was modelled, is sublime  
Experience, beyond all woman fears.

And though my precious grains of golden sand  
Have dropped this first faint signal on my hair,  
I would not count them backward. And I swear  
Each as it falls shall leave at my demand  
Some treasure of the Spirit in my hand—  
And take no bauble that I would not spare!



## MAGDALENA

" I HAVE seen the Master's face  
    Bending down to my low place—  
    Seen his eyes of boundless pity  
    Proving my disgrace.

" And I follow at his side,  
    Though He knows all I would hide—  
    All the burning love I could not  
    Smother if I tried."



## THE VIGIL OF JOSEPH

AFTER the Wise Men went, and the strange star  
Had faded out, Joseph the father sat  
Watching the sleeping Mother and the Babe,  
And thinking stern, sweet thoughts the long night through.

“ Ah, what am I, that God has chosen me  
To bear this blessed burden, to endure  
Daily the presence of this loveliness,  
To guide this Glory that shall guide the world?

“ Brawny these arms to win Him bread, and broad  
This bosom to sustain Her. But my heart  
Quivers in lonely pain before that Beauty  
It loves—and serves—and cannot understand!”



## COME TO ME, LITTLE ONE

COME to me, little one, drowsy and dear;  
Mother will spare me her darling awhile.  
I am so lonely when twilight is here!  
Lie on my bosom, and nestle, and smile.

I have no little one, dearie, like you,  
No little hand to hold close in the night,  
No one to dream of the lonely hours through,  
No one to wake for when God sends the light.

You are so sorry? Oh, bless you, my sweet!  
Dear little fingers that wipe off the tears!  
Little soft body and little white feet,  
How will they treat you—the terrible years?

Life is so fair to a baby like you;  
All things are wonderful under the sun,  
Rainbows are real, and all stories are true.—  
Would they might be so when childhood is done!

Wide little eyes that are questioning so,  
Life is no stranger to you than to me.  
The secrets worth knowing I never shall know,  
The end of the rainbow I never shall see.



## THE FROZEN GRAIL

So, little drowsy one, nestle and sleep,—

Lullaby, baby, O lullaby-low!

There always is peace in the dreams that are deep,—

Lullaby, little one, lullaby-low.

### THE MOSQUITO

**T**HE slime has taken wings, and cries to me  
To feed its fury with my finer life;  
So full of the intense desire *to be*  
Is each earth atom, and so fierce the strife!



## THE VISITOR

A CROSS the city roofs it came,  
A golden butterfly,  
Into my open window here—  
So bare and grey and high!

Unmindful of my startled gaze,  
It hovered overhead;  
Then lit beside the crèpen veil  
Which lay upon the bed.

Only a moment did it stay  
Beside the symbol there;  
Its golden wings it spread again  
And vanished in the air.

How strange that such a visitor  
Should seek this granite height!—  
Or was it the bewildered soul  
Of her who died last night?



## THE HAUNTER OF THE TWILIGHT

**W**HERE are you now, as the night draws down,  
Comrade of mine?  
I have followed you out of the noisy town  
To a narrow house, all bare and brown,  
And left you lonely and supine,  
Without a sign.

Three long days did I question you  
When none was nigh.  
Three long nights did my soul pursue  
Your fleeing soul, for a final clue  
To the mystic errand, swift and high,  
That made you die.

Side by side we were sitting there  
At dusk of day.  
Though nearer the door, I was not aware  
When the chilly Stranger passed my chair.  
I could not hear what you turned to say  
As you went away.

Comrade of mine, was the secret sweet  
The Stranger taught—  
A message of triumph to charm defeat,  
Giving you joy of your last heartbeat?  
You went so quickly he must have brought  
The thing you sought.

## THE FROZEN GRAIL

Then why I am troubled as night draws near

With a vague unrest? . . .

It is not hope, it is not fear,

But I feel an uneasy presence here;

And I know for the souls who have entered the West,

Deep sleep is best.

## PENITENCE

**O**H, bitter are the penitential tears  
That water the Tree of Knowledge! Could I grasp  
Tightly the subtil serpent, till no gasp  
Of life were left in that lithe form that rears  
Its jewelled head to mock me, my proud years  
Would wear the achievement as a diamond clasp.  
But under every rose-tree the coiled asp  
Waits with its message for my willing ears.

"Stay thy rash hand!" the great Voice counsels me.  
"Knowest thou not the Teacher, foolish one?  
Study the strange new lesson given thee.  
Waste not thine hour regretting what is done.  
Thou knowest much that still was mystery  
Ere thy regretful tears darkened the sun."





## ON LAKE GEORGE

**B**ECALMED within my little boat I lie,  
Between the night lake and the star-eyed sky,  
And all the spellbound Universe is I.

My dark doubt is the cloud on yonder height,  
My faith—the peace that hovers on the night,  
My lives—the myriad rays of the starlight.

I am these yearning spheres of sky and earth;  
My thought encircles their stupendous girth  
As light encircled us before our birth.

One, in the womb of Life, did we remain  
Through ages unrecorded; and God's gain  
Was great the day we were brought forth in pain.

But suddenly my boat rocks in the wind!  
Madly the lake reels—like a wayward mind,  
And all the eyes of night are stricken blind.

The cloud from yonder height obscures all things:  
The peace that hovered, now beats frightened wings,  
And my lone life to her lone body clings.

Now, on the sea of Time, only a mark  
Am I; my form is the frail tossing barque  
Between me and the void and timeless dark.



## THE GUARDIANS

**T**HERE is a beauty in the faded leaves  
That lie all disregarded on the ground;  
The guardians of the blossom and the fruit  
In those dry forms are found.

And there is beauty in the faded men—  
The disregarded on life's toilsome ways;  
Their blood has fed the blossom of our songs,  
And theirs should be the praise.



## A WORD

**I** BREATHED a little word all heedlessly  
One cloudy morning to a doubting friend,  
A word whose deeps I did not comprehend,  
A word of wonder and of destiny.  
'Twas long ago; but still those sounds to me  
Re-echo, and their burden will extend  
In broken rhythm beyond time's faint end,  
Marring the stillness of eternity.

So now I stand with wide and watchful eyes,  
And ever-guarding finger on my lip,  
That from my heart no heedless word may slip—  
No subtle word for doubt to signalise.  
Something is wrong with man, if, to be wise,  
He must forego freedom in fellowship!



## REALISATION

HE gazed indifferently across the wide  
Home river mirroring the infinite sky.  
"Oh, to behold Jerusalem!" he cried.  
"To bathe in Jordan river ere I die!"

As an earthworm that restlessly inquires  
The road to daylight, reaches the sun's beams,  
So he at last came to his heart's desire—  
Came to the city and river of his dreams.

Jerusalem the Mighty was now spread  
Before him . . . He was homesick and forlorn.  
"Why, 'tis not half so beautiful," he said,  
"As the elm-shaded town where I was born!"

He bathed in Jordan river . . . It was cold.  
Was this the storied stream that he had sought?  
"Oh, how the books deceived me! Why, the old  
River at home is twice as wide!" he thought.





## THE OFFERING

S OUL of the Universe, to Thee I bring  
Tribute of all my treasures, and entreat  
Only Thy full acceptance. At Thy feet  
I lay them down—a humble offering,  
But all I have: The songs thou bad'st me sing,  
My love, my dreams of fame, my last heartbeat.  
Yea, I would make the sacrifice complete,  
Nor for myself retain one precious thing.

Take Thou that narrow self, and let it be  
One with Thy vast Self; for the road is dark  
Whereby I travel, and my soul's lone spark  
Yearns for the parent Flame. Or, make of me—  
If for that boon unfit—a warning mark  
Upon the reefs of life's uncharted sea.



## THE SONG OF MY SOUL

**L**ONG did I wonder what my soul might be.  
Was it a pale reflection of God's light  
Upon the surface of terrestrial night?  
Was it the memory of eternity  
Hidden behind the world-veil from my sight?  
There came no answer, though I questioned long,  
Until one day I heard my soul's own song:  
"I am the spirit of Love that burns in thee  
And in all things, quivering to reunite."



## THE SINGER

**I**F any rumours of my humble days  
Be blown along the dusty roads of time,  
May they not be of one who built the rhyme  
But as a higher business; nor in praise  
Of all-triumphant wrong disgraced the bays  
Won by true singers in a worthier clime;  
Nor on the mighty masters' paradigm  
Brodered the ornaments of empty phrase.

But may those rumours be of one whose lyre  
Was the deep voice of the imprisoned soul,  
Whose mystic incantations could inspire  
Visions, and power to read Life's hidden scroll:  
Pain's purpose, and the meaning of desire—  
The urge that drives us toward the unknown goal.

## NOTE

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